

## Rebecca Marshall, RN

### on behalf of the Alberta Primary Care Nurses Association

I have spent many hours during my 35-year nursing career seeing patients for repeat hospital admissions and practising reactive care for chronic illness and system management of disease processes. I felt I wasn't making a difference in their health outcomes, family support structures or empowering patients to manage their health.

In 2006, an innovative journey began within the family practice setting. Primary care networks were created to focus on the concept of having patients at the centre of health care. Primary care promotes access for patients and their families to various health-care professionals, tools and resources in the primary care physician office. This empowers patients to take control of their own health.

Nurses are leaders in this health-care approach and they provide support, strategies and education to patients and their families. We are an integral member of the patient-centred care team. This is why I'm proud to have played a part in the creation of the Alberta Primary Care Nurses Association, a newly-formed and CARNA-recognized specialty practice group. This group was created through vision, cooperation and commitment to advocate for registered nurses within the primary care setting who are pivotal in supporting patients in their quest for self-health management and prevention.

The nursing role in our clinic is one of chronic disease education such as diabetes, COPD, asthma, hypertension, dyslipidemia. We provide wound care, foot care, cancer screening, mental health support, immunizations, immunotherapy and several daily nursing tasks. We are the physician liaison for patients navigating the health-care system utilizing collaboration with community and hospital health-care teams.



Members of Parish Nursing Alberta

## Nicole Lemke, BN, RN

### on behalf of Parish Nursing Alberta

Parish nurses promote health, healing and wholeness through emphasizing the spiritual aspects in a holistic approach to nursing. To improve client outcomes, the parish nurse role includes advocacy, counselling, education and resource referral.

Parish nurses need to communicate effectively, take initiative, empower others, be flexible and work alongside the established leadership approach or style within their practice setting.

We are a small but growing specialty practice area in Alberta and the geographical distance between practitioners makes it challenging to get connected with peer mentorship. An additional barrier is that the role of the parish nurse is not well understood, so faith communities require education in order to embrace and establish this practice.

Specialty practice groups like Parish Nursing Alberta strive to increase understanding and awareness and promote a culture of leadership, providing a safe space to grow, teach and learn. They also support equipping nurses for competent and compassionate practice through conferences and partnering with an educational institution in Alberta to provide a parish nursing course.

For me, leadership is role modelling and providing support to those who work in parish nurse ministry. For parish nurses, leadership is a way to share and communicate common goals and objectives. Leadership gives directions for purpose and identifies practical ways to function within the role of a parish nurse. Individually, the parish nurse needs to recognise their own leadership potential. Establishing boundaries promotes self-care which is also essential in healthy leadership. RN